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Soils of the U. S. Department of Agriculture. An act passed by the last legislature provides that a soil survey and a soil map of the state be made to ascertain the character and fertility of the developed and undeveloped soils of the state, the extent and practicability of drainage of swamp and wet lands and the means for conserving and increasing the fertility of the soils. The sum of \$10,000 annually is appropriated for the next two years for this work.

ACCORDING to the London *Times* an ascertained commercial value of £4 per milligram (equivalent to £114,000 per ounce) has been placed upon radium by a contract just entered into between the British Metalliferous Mines (Limited) and Lord Iveagh and Sir Ernest Cassel for the supply of  $7\frac{1}{2}$  grams (rather more than a quarter of an ounce) of pure radium bromide. This very large order for radium will be supplied from the above named company's mine near Grampound Road in Cornwall. In the short history of radium there has never hitherto been known any greater order than a gram. The first recorded order on a large scale will therefore be supplied from the British source from which several of the smaller orders have already been supplied. Messrs. Buchler and Co., of Brunswick, will produce the radium from the Cornish pitchblende under the superintendence of Professor Giesel, their chief chemist. The  $7\frac{1}{2}$  grams of radium referred to are to be presented by Lord Iveagh and Sir Ernest Cassel to the Radium Institute, to the formation of which they have already contributed very large funds. The Radium Institute, which will be under the surgical direction of Sir Frederick Treves, is expected to be ready to receive patients suffering from cancer about the end of the present year.

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#### UNIVERSITY AND EDUCATIONAL NEWS

M. HENRY DEUTSCH has given 500,000 francs, and promises in addition an annual grant of 15,000 francs, towards the creation of an aerotechnical institute in the University of Paris.

M. Basil Zakaroff has given 700,000 francs for the foundation of a chair of aviation in the faculty of sciences of the university.

A COLLEGE of mining engineering has been established at the University of Illinois. The Western Society of Engineers was instrumental in inducing the legislature to make the necessary appropriations. A committee for that purpose composed of F. A. Delano, Bion J. Arnold, John M. Ewen, Isham Randolph, Robert W. Hunt and A. Bement was appointed by the society.

At the summer school of Columbia University there are about 1,930 students, about 400 more than were registered last year. In 1908 registration was 1,532, in 1907, 1,200, in 1906 1,000. The 1909 registration does not include the thirty medical students who are attending lectures, nor the 300 undergraduates who are taking the regular summer engineering courses at Camp Columbia, Washington, Conn.

THE College of Agriculture of the University of Wisconsin has established a department of agricultural economics in charge of Professor Henry C. Taylor.

THE following appointments have been made in the medical department of Cornell University: Dr. Frank Sherman Meara, professor of therapeutics and clinical medicine; Dr. Charles N. B. Camac, professor of clinical medicine; Dr. William J. Elser, professor of bacteriology; Dr. John A. Hartwell, professor of clinical surgery; Dr. William B. Coley, professor of clinical surgery; Dr. Silas P. Beebe, assistant professor of experimental therapeutics, and Dr. John R. Murlin, assistant professor of physiology.

DR. RALPH S. MINOR, professor of physics at the University of Nevada, has accepted an associate professorship of physics in charge of the lower division work at the University of California. The position in Nevada has been filled by the appointment of Professor Leon W. Hartman who, for the last four years, has been associate professor of physics in charge of the department at the University of Utah.

DR. W. H. SHELDON, preceptor of philosophy at Princeton University, has been elected professor of philosophy at Dartmouth College.

DR. HARDEE CHAMBLISS, of the research staff of the General Chemical Company, New York, has accepted the professorship of chemistry in the Oklahoma Agricultural and Mechanical College at Stillwater, Okla.

MR. BENJAMIN F. LUTMAN, assistant in botany at the University of Wisconsin, has been appointed assistant botanist in the Agricultural College of the University of Vermont.

DR. J. ELIOT COIT, of the University of Arizona, has accepted the assistant professorship of pomology in the University of California.

IN the department of zoology at Northwestern University, Dr. E. H. Harper has been promoted to an assistant professorship and Charles S. Mead, Ph.D. (Columbia), has been appointed instructor in zoology.

PROFESSOR JOHN COX has retired after nineteen years as Macdonald professor of physics in McGill University and first director of the Macdonald Physics Building. Professor H. T. Barnes has been appointed director and Professor H. A. Wilson, F.R.S., has been appointed Macdonald professor of physics. Dr. H. L. Brown has been appointed assistant professor of physics, Mr. F. H. Day and Mr. W. R. Gillis, lecturers in physics, Mr. A. L. Dickieson, Mr. N. E. Wheeler and Mr. A. G. Hatcher, demonstrators in physics.

IN the Queen's University of Belfast appointments have been made as follows: professor of botany, Mr. D. T. Gwynne-Vaughan; lecturer in organic chemistry, Dr. A. W. Stewart; lecturer in physics, Dr. Robert Jack; lecturer in bio-chemistry, Dr. J. A. Milroy; lecturer in geology and geography, Dr. A. R. Derryhouse; lecturer on hygiene, Dr. W. James Wilson.

DR. G. S. WEST has been appointed to the chair of botany and vegetable physiology in the University of Birmingham, rendered vacant by the retirement of Professor Hillhouse.

## DISCUSSION AND CORRESPONDENCE

### REMARKS ON RECENT CONTRIBUTIONS TO COSMOGONY

TO THE EDITOR OF SCIENCE: In your issue of May 28 is a letter by T. J. J. See, ostensibly demanding "fair play and toleration" in the consideration of current contributions to science, but clearly written for the purpose of exploiting some of his own recent writings. In this letter, notwithstanding the implications of its caption, he takes occasion to characterize the work of Professor Chamberlin and myself as "inconsistent and purely destructive," and says:

If Professor Blackwelder will study my last paper carefully, and the work now in press, when it appears, he will find that most of the recent speculations on cosmogony are not worth the paper they are written on; and yet some of them have been published by the *Astrophysical Journal* and the Carnegie Institution.

He also modestly states:

It is only fair to say that no constructive results of consistent character had been reached on this subject till my own investigation was completed last year. . . . As I have worked on this subject uninterruptedly for twenty-five years, I am prepared to speak with some degree of authority.

Because of these extravagant pretensions and the fact that a majority of the readers of SCIENCE, being unfamiliar with the details of recent developments in this subject, will not credit any one with having the monumental nerve to put forward such claims without there being some basis for them, I beg the privilege of taking enough space to state briefly the facts relating to this matter.

The well-known nebular hypothesis was put forward briefly by Laplace, in 1796, at the end of a work on popular astronomy. Its simplicity and attractiveness, as well as the great name of its author, soon gained for it wide acceptance among scientific men. It satisfied those racial instincts for an explanation of the origin of things which gave rise to the cosmogonies of the ancients; and in stirring the emotions, the majestic sweep of events which